

## **TOWN & AREA PLANS POLICY STATEMENT**

### **Introduction**

Town and Area Plans were introduced by Council in 2011. The first plans, focusing on the County's main towns, were signed off in early 2012. Since 2012, the Plans have been expanded to include the rural communities surrounding the towns.

A review carried out in 2014 identified the need for greater clarity on the role and purpose of Town and Area Plans. This Policy Statement describes the policy objectives Town and Area Plans are intended to address.

An operational framework will accompany this Policy Statement to give greater clarity on how Town and Area Plans should be developed, delivered, monitored and reviewed. The operational framework will also set out the various roles and responsibilities of officers, Members and other key stakeholders involved in the Plans.

### **Policy Context**

Denbighshire County Council has long held an objective to be a high performing Council, close to its communities. Closer to the Community is identified as an overarching aspiration in the Council's Corporate Plan. In a review of the Closer to the Community objective in 2013, Town & Area Plans were identified as one of the components for taking forward the Closer to the Community objective, with a focus on mapping local community needs and aspirations, and building community capacity.

The Corporate Plan 2012/17 sets out an ambitious agenda for change across a range of priority areas. Developing the Local Economy is identified as one of these priorities. Vibrant towns and communities are seen as an important element of a healthy local economy.

In 2011, Denbighshire County Council together with its key partners developed the first Big Plan for Denbighshire. The Big Plan set out a long term vision for Denbighshire and identified a comprehensive set of actions to address elements of that vision. The Big Plan has been reviewed and a new more focused Wellbeing Plan is now emerging. The new Plan focuses on supporting people and communities to become more independent and resilient, and developing the right environment in which people can maintain their individual and community wellbeing.

Town and Area Plans have an important contribution to make to these 3 policy objectives, and are therefore considered to be important mechanisms for:

**Bringing the Council Closer to its Communities**

**Building Vibrant Towns & Communities**

**Supporting the Development of Independent & Resilient Communities**

## **Key Principles**

Taking these 3 policy objectives, Town and Area Plans can be seen to be an important mechanism for articulating the Council's local response to the needs of its communities, and for delivering its overarching priorities at local level.

Town and Area Plans therefore should:

- Identify the needs and the short, medium and longer term aspirations of a local community and set out a vision for a sustainable future
- Act as living documents that can adapt and respond to changing circumstances
- Support the Council's Corporate Plan priorities as a whole, with a particular focus on Developing the Local Economy
- Demonstrate what action is needed at local level to build and maintain the vibrancy of Denbighshire's towns and communities
- Be based on the premise that towns and their surrounding rural communities are economically interdependent and cannot be treated in isolation from each other
- Reflect 'natural' groupings of communities that make sense on the ground regardless of organisational boundaries
- Recognise that we have a network of towns and communities across Denbighshire with similar challenges and opportunities, that should be tackled collectively, but equally some challenges that are unique to a particular community and may need a more tailored response
- Be supported by realistic and achievable action plans that demonstrate how progress towards the future visions can be delivered
- Show a clear link between the evidence of need in a local community, the vision for a sustainable future that is set as a consequence and the activities that are included in the supporting action plan
- Be owned and led on behalf of local communities by their local elected representatives.
- Recognise that everyone – agencies and residents alike - has a responsibility for progressing the priorities set out in the plans.

### **In practice, this will mean that:**

- Plans will show a clear understanding of how towns, their centres and their associated communities interact with each other, and how they affect each other's future sustainability.
- Plans should demonstrate how the issues affecting towns and their associated communities have been considered in drawing up both the vision statements and the resulting action plans. Actions should be based on evidence that an issue requires to be addressed and that the action is an effective means of delivering the anticipated benefit. There should be a clear focus on benefits and outcomes in all Plans.

- Whilst based on local knowledge and reflecting local needs and aspirations, as County Council plans, the responsibility for deciding what to include in plans must remain with the Council. Local consultation will form an integral part of developing the plans. Local Councillors will provide the link from the local community to the Plan. To assist with coordination, a Champion will be appointed for each Town and Area Plan.
- Where actions align with projects supporting the Council's Corporate Plan priorities or individual Service Plan commitments, a case for allocation of resources may be possible. It is a clear expectation that communities will play an important role in identifying sources of funding for their local priorities. There can be no assumption that the Council will fund all or any of the priorities arising from the Plans.
- As agreed statements of evidenced local need and priority, there will be an expectation that Council Services – and increasingly partner organisations – will pay due regard to the issues and actions set out in each Plan. Wherever possible within financial constraints, Services will reflect priority actions in their Service Plans. In recognition of this, actions should only be included a Plan with the involvement of the relevant Service.

**The detail of how Plans are developed, how they are structured and who should be involved at each stage is contained in the Operational Framework document.**

August 2014.